



A CITIZEN-LED ASSESSMENT: ASER IN NEPAL

Focusing On “Localized Solutions”,
Ensuring The Community Ownership Of
Children’s Learning and Development

INTRODUCTION TO CITIZEN-LED ASSESSMENTS

The issue that many children worldwide are not acquiring essential reading and numeracy skills despite years of schooling has not been adequately addressed in national and international assessments, which focus on grade-level performance rather than foundational competencies. CLAs offer an alternative by providing critical evidence on foundational skills and connecting assessment outcomes to remedial actions.

The CLA model is founded on four guiding principles:



HOUSEHOLD-BASED ASSESSMENTS: Conducted in homes to include all children, irrespective of their enrollment status (Out-of-School and School going Children including all types of schools).



ORAL, ONE-ON-ONE ASSESSMENTS: Recognized as the most effective method for evaluating foundational skills (UIS, 2016; Nag, 2017).



FOCUS ON FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS: Assessments focus on core literacy and numeracy competencies expected at Grades 2 or 3 aligned with Global Proficiency Framework.



SIMPLE AND ACCESSIBLE TOOLS: Designed to engage parents, community members, teachers, and policymakers effectively. And used tools that are easy to administer and understand, facilitating engagement from parents, community members, teachers, and policymakers which do not require technical expertise to use.

HOW ARE CITIZEN-LED ASSESSMENTS USED GLOBALLY AND IN SOUTH ASIA?

Despite significant progress in increasing school enrollment worldwide, a considerable number of children continue to lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills. This issue, often referred to as 'learning poverty,' has been highlighted by UNESCO (2013, 2015) and the World Bank (2019). Traditional large-scale assessments primarily evaluate students' comprehension of grade-level content but often overlook foundational skills, leaving crucial learning gaps unaddressed.

In response to this challenge, Citizen-Led Assessments (CLAs) have emerged as a grassroots approach to measuring foundational learning and catalyzing action at the community level. Pioneered by Pratham Education Foundation in India in 2005, the CLA model has expanded across various countries in the Global South, adapting to different socio-cultural contexts and educational needs (PAL Network, 2024). In Nepal, ASER Nepal, hosted by Galli Galli Non-Profit, has been instrumental in adopting Citizen-led assessment model to assess and improve children's foundational learning levels. Since its inception in India in 2005, the CLA model has been successfully adapted in various countries across the Global South, demonstrating its flexibility and effectiveness. For example:

- **India and Pakistan:** Large-scale annual surveys assess over half a million children, providing representative data on foundational learning across regions and age groups.
- **Botswana:** Assessments conducted by teachers to identify and track students needing remedial support.
- **Uganda:** Tools used in refugee camps to understand the learning needs of displaced children.
- **Mexico and Kenya:** Assessment results spurred localized initiatives by schools and civil society actors to improve children's foundational skills.

In 2015, 15 organizations from across the Global South established the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network, which coordinates CLAs in multiple countries. Beyond these organizations, a 2019 review documented the use of CLA tools by 56 national and international organizations in 33 countries. In 2019, the PAL Network developed the International Common Assessment of Numeracy (ICAN), marking the first step toward creating a comparable evidence base on children's foundational numeracy skills in Global South contexts. ICAN was implemented in one district in each of 13 PAL Network countries (PAL Network, 2020). Galli Galli / ASER Nepal is part of this global movement and has played a key role in contextualizing the CLA approach to suit Nepal's unique challenges and opportunities.

ASER NEPAL: A CITIZEN-LED ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE IN NEPAL

ASER Nepal, launched in 2016 and led by Galli Galli Not-for-Profit, is a citizen-led initiative designed to assess foundational literacy and numeracy among children aged 5–16 years across Nepal. ASER Nepal as citizen-led assessment tool has been piloted in various regions, including one district in 2016, one municipality in 2017-18, and one province in 2019. It was further expanded to other 3 municipalities in 2020, 5 districts of Karnali province in 2022. The assessment and survey provides invaluable data on the basic abilities of children aged 5-16 years in Nepal, particularly their capacity to read and perform basic arithmetic at a third-grade level.

ASER Nepal, led by Galli Galli, is a citizen-led initiative designed to assess foundational literacy and numeracy among children aged 5–16 years across Nepal. The initiative provides data-driven insights to inform policies and drive community action, ensuring every child acquires essential skills for lifelong learning. ASER Nepal follows a unique approach by mobilizing and training local volunteers to conduct assessments at the household level, thus ensuring inclusivity of all children—whether school-going, out-of-school, or in alternative learning settings. This participatory process fosters a sense of community ownership and empowerment. ASER Nepal has partnered with more than 10 civil society organizations, INGOs, and local governments to conduct foundational learning assessments in Nepal.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF ASER NEPAL

Since its inception, ASER Nepal has made significant progress in measuring and addressing foundational learning gaps:



Assessed

1,282

wards across 22 districts of Nepal.



Mobilized over

7,200

youth volunteers to conduct assessments.



Evaluated foundational learning levels of

142,700+

children.



Engaged over

2,000

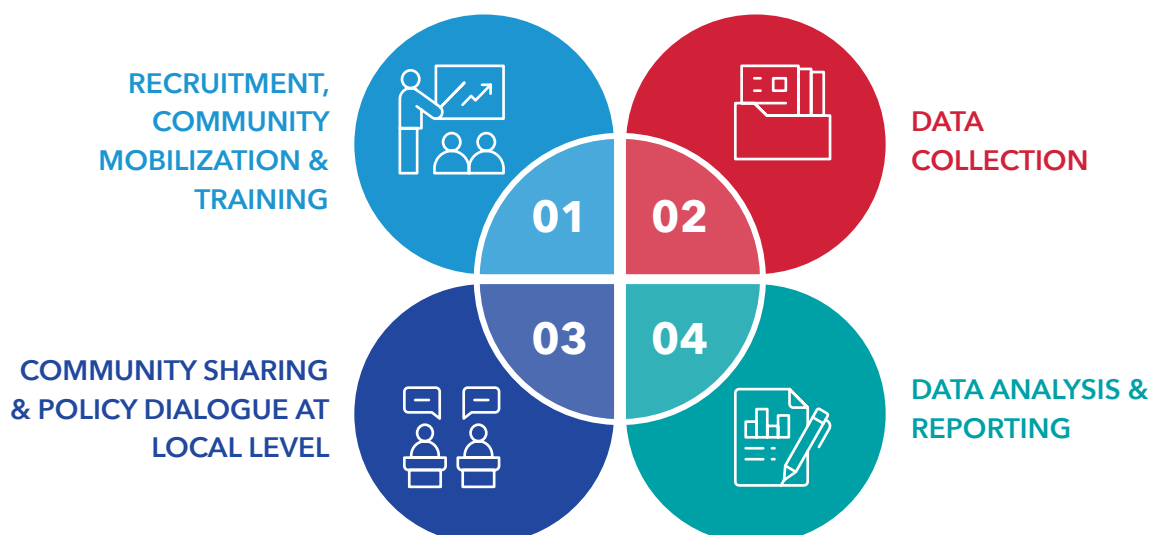
parents and community members in discussions about children's learning.



Influenced local governments and stakeholders to implement evidence-based educational policies.

HOW DOES ASER NEPAL WORK?

The ASER Nepal process involves several steps:





1. RECRUITMENT, COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION & TRAINING:

- Community meetings at Ward level along with representatives from ward suggest a list of available volunteers.
- Volunteers are finalized based on learning assessment of themselves and interviews.
- Those local youth volunteers are trained on assessment tools and techniques to ensure quality data collection.



2. DATA COLLECTION:

- Volunteers visit selected households to conduct one-on-one assessments focusing on literacy and numeracy skills.
- Local stakeholders, community leaders and ASER Nepal team monitor and supervise the data collection process to ensure data quality.



3. COMMUNITY SHARING & POLICY DIALOGUE AT LOCAL LEVEL:

- Local volunteers are trained to data compilation, data cleaning and simple tabulation based on descriptive statistics, mostly handwritten in rural areas.
- Findings are first shared at the community level through informal meetings and handwritten charts to facilitate local ownership and accountability.



4. DATA ANALYSIS & REPORTING:

- ASER Nepal compiles the collected data and shares it as public goods, available freely for use by all stakeholders.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED BY ASER NEPAL

ASER Nepal addresses key challenges in Nepal's education sector, including:

- 1. Learning Poverty:** Many children lack foundational skills despite being enrolled in school for several years.
- 2. Equity in Education:** Ensuring inclusion of marginalized and out-of-school children in learning debate.
- 3. Data-Driven Policy Making:** Supporting local governments, schools and stakeholders with reliable data for targeted interventions.

COLLABORATIONS AND IMPACT

ASER Nepal collaborates with various stakeholders to expand its reach and enhance its impact. Several national and international organizations in Nepal have used ASER Nepal's tools and methodologies into their education research or projects, including but not limited to:



Street Child
Nepal
(2019-2024)



AASMAN Nepal
(2019-2024)



SAHAS Nepal
(2023-2024)



Collaborative
School Network
(CSN)
(2020-2025)



Teach for Nepal
(2017-2020)



Changing the
Story Nepal
(2016-2023)



KarkhanaSamuha
(2019-2023)



Fun Play Learn
(FPL)
(2023)

Tulsipur
Municipality
(2019-2020)

Budhanilkantha
Municipality
(2017-2018)

These partnerships have helped scale the assessment model to new regions, ensuring a broader impact on foundational learning initiatives across Nepal.

HOW ASER NEPAL STANDS OUT

ASER Nepal's approach is unique in its emphasis on:

- **Community Ownership:**
 - » Local stakeholders, including ward offices, facilitate volunteer recruitment and engage in data dissemination and action planning.
- **Transparency and Open Access:**
 - » All assessment tools, reports and data are available publicly, ensuring transparency and wider usage.
- **Evidence-Based Action:**
 - » The assessment findings directly inform policy decisions and lead to localized interventions to address learning gaps even leading to citizen-led actions.

ASER Nepal is more than just an assessment; it is a movement for educational accountability and improvement. By involving communities at every stage—from data collection to action—it aims to ensure that insights translate into tangible outcomes for children's learning and development.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Support ASER Nepal's mission by:



VOLUNTEERING

Join our network of youth volunteers to conduct assessments.



ADVOCATING

Raise awareness about foundational learning challenges.



PARTNERING

Collaborate with us to expand the program's reach.

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CONTACT US

Galli Galli / ASER Nepal
Post Box No. 9434, Kathmandu, Nepal
www.galligalli.org.np
admin@galligalli.org
+977-1-5424815